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ABSTRACT

The data reported here were gathered in three ethnographic studies in different research settings: a single school, school district, and research center/school district team. These longitudinal studies incorporated the use of ethnography for purposes of collecting data about classroom teachers, principals, staff developers, central office administrators, and researchers who were involved in differnet different kinds of innovation implementation projects. This survey of participants reveals what it is like to be the subjects of ethnographic observation. Analysis of such data and synthesis is the focus of this paper: findings are discussed in terms of how participants perceive their role in the research process as compared to that of the ethnographer, as well as how the participants feel about being subjects of intensive scrutiny. Conclusions and recommendations are suggested in the following terms: personal reactions, role and visibility of the ethnographer, acceptance and trust, ethnographic methods and data, feedback, impact of ethnographers, and characteristics of ethnographers. (Author/GK)

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UNDER THE EYE OF THE ETHNOGRAPHER: REACTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE OBSERVED

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UNDER THE EYE OF THE ETHNOGRAPHER: REACTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE OBSERVED[1,2]

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With increasing frequency, ethnography is being used as a methodological tool for collecting descriptive data in educational settings. Much is being written about the role of the ethnographer: how to train one, what one does. It seems a relatively simple task to install an ethnographer unobtrusively in a classroom corner to record teacher/pupil interactions, or in the principal's office to observe how he schedules and discharges his appointments with a variety of callers, or even in the superintendent's sanctuary to learn first-hand how the executive functions in a school district. The ethnographer gets the data.

Yet, little attention has been given to the individuals who are the focus of the observation. What are their perceptions of the ethnographer and the ethnographic method? What impact does the presence of the ethnographer have on the individual? Do persons who are being closely scrutinized by an ethnographer react strongly or do they ignore the observer? Are they too "near sighted" to be aware of his/her presence or do they refuse him/her entry, banish the observer from their territory?

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[1]Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, March 31, 1978.

[2]The research described herein was conducted under contract with the National Institute of Education. The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the National Institute of Education, and no endorsement by the National Institute of Education should be inferred.

Part of research undertaken by the Procedures for Adopting Educational Innovations Project at the University of Texas R&D Center, the data reported here were gathered in three ethnographic studies in different research settings: a single school, a school district, a research center/school district team. These longitudinal studies incorporated the use of ethnography for purposes of collecting data about classroom teachers, principals, staff developers, central office administrators, as well as researchers themselves, who were involved in different kinds of implementation projects. How do these individuals feel about being the subjects of intensive scrutiny? How do the perceptions of the ethnographer and the ethnographic process held by these groups of people differ? Do teachers have feelings different from those of administrators with respect to the ethnographer?

This survey of participants reveals what it is like to be the subject of ethnographic observation: how the participants perceive the techniques of ethnography, the roles of ethnographers, and their own relationships to the research process. Analysis of these data and synthesis is the focus of this paper.

Lack of Related Literature

There is extensive writing in anthropology and a burgeoning literature in the field of education on the methods and products of ethnography. Suggestions are made about how to collect data and how the ethnographer might comport himself/herself and work so as to minimize the effect of a researcher's presence on the subjects of study. Many techniques and strategies have been devised to address this problem, that is, to minimize subjects' reactions which might be influenced by the shadow of the observer who is present. And yet, there are no reports that directly reveal the subjects' perceptions of and reactions to the researcher or the methods. R.H. Wax, in Doing Fieldwork (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, Illinois, 1971) alludes to being perceived as a "spy" of the administration,

but this issue is not systematically pursued. Perhaps the prevailing sentiment is that getting the views and perceptions of the subjects on these topics will make them more aware of the ethnographer's presence and as a consequence, detrimentally influence the research.

This is a report of the views of the subjects of ethnographic study. Because the studies that provide these data are ongoing projects, great care has been taken to report this information in ways that will not increase the anxieties or concerns of the informants (anthropological term commonly used to label those who are being observed), who might or might not see this report before the study is over. Certain analyses and statements about the data were deemed inappropriate at this time. More rigorous studies of this type should be initiated, once the ethnographic research has been completed.

Sources of Data

Research sites. The data presented here come from three separate, ongoing studies of implementing educational innovations. The roles of the ethnographers in these studies are briefly sketched in the following paragraphs. We note here, to explain the use of the feminine pronoun throughout the paper, that each of the ethnographers is a woman. All are professional educators who have made independent contributions in teacher training.

The first of the studies is set in a large suburban school district of over 80 elementary schools were teachers of grades 3-6 are implementing a newly revised science curriculum. The new curriculum was designed by the school district and encompasses many previously used materials in addition to a new Teacher's Guide. This guide outlines activities and provides teachers with specific "how-to-do-it" instructions.

The ethnographer at this site is housed in the school system's staff development department and tracks administrative meetings, inservice training,

telephone logs, and a variety of staff development sessions. She operates on a system-wide level. She serves also as the research project's liaison for the staff development academy and the principals in the implementation schools. This provides opportunities for collecting data about how the system works. Because the ethnographer strives to follow the implementation in a large number of schools across the district, her vantage point must be in the upper levels of the organizational chart. It is not possible for her to be closely in-tune with many individual teachers in the system. Her work has been to report on the staff development and central administration personnel as they plan for and implement inservice training and staff development for the users in the school district. Her focus is on interventions, and her frame of reference is at the system level.

The second study from which data is reported is of a school which is implementing use of an "innovation bundle": a communication system, a strategy for discipline, and several other components. The ethnographer has been focusing on teachers as they learned about the innovations, on changes in their concerns and on their interactions with staff developers and trainers during the change process. The ethnographer observes university faculty and administrators, school district on-site administrators, and 40 classroom and special teachers in the single school. The ethnographer has developed warm and strong relationships with the staff she is observing even though she does not live in the area and visits the site only periodically. During the first year of the implementation effort she was there twice a month for several days. Now, during the second year, she goes to the site every six weeks for a few days to track events and interactions in the innovation implementation.

The third study that utilizes ethnography centers on the collaboration between a research center and a school district. This collaboration is focused on an area of need in the district, that of achievement gains for a subset of the

district's children. The center provides resources to the school system and in exchange gains research opportunities. One outcome of this work is to be a model for collaboration between researchers and practitioners. An ethnographer is responsible for following and documenting each step and phase of the collaboration, from initiation through operationalization. She has concentrated her efforts on the relationships between the research center personnel and the school administrators. The ideas, actions and perceptions of the relatively small number of people who have designed and developed plans for the collaboration have been recorded. The ethnographer has interacted readily with those participants and gained a good deal of knowledge and insight about the collaborative process.

Additionally in a study resulting from this collaborative effort, a team of ethnographers has been observing the pre-instructional strategies teachers employ to set the stage for learning in their classrooms. Ethnography has been used to gather information at the level of both planner and practitioner to further the aims of the collaborative venture.

Description of sample. The data in this report reflect the points of view of individuals in a variety of roles. They represent a sampling of classroom teachers, team teaching leaders, school district program developers, central office staff developers and curriculum coordinators. Also represented are school district administrators, university administrators, university faculty consultants, school district researchers and research managers from a research center.

Thirty-nine people were interviewed about ethnography and ethnographers. They have been divided into three large groupings. One group is classroom teachers, whether they were observed in classrooms, going about their work with little interaction with ethnographers, or whether they were involved in training programs while being observed and had more interaction with ethnographers.

The second group contains implementation facilitators, whether they are

school-based or whether they may have been introduced from an outside institution. These people are consultants, responsible for training or working in a front-line way with users to help them begin using or improve their use of the innovation.

The third group is labeled facilitating administrators. This group includes university administrators, school system administrators and building principals. They support and nurture the implementation efforts as managers at all three sites, but at varying distances from users.

These three groups cut across all three study sites so that persons from each site are included in each group. These individuals could have been grouped differently so that absolute, site-discrete divisions occurred. This was not done for the purpose of anonymity and masking the data. Where persons' roles overlapped, they were placed appropriately to preserve the confidentiality of their identities.

Methodology

A personal interview was developed to elicit responses concerning the (ethnographic) research process from the people who have been the subjects of ethnographic inquiry. Initial trials with questions that focused on the methods of ethnography indicated that such questions did not produce a good deal of useful information, while questions that drew interviewees' attention to the ethnographer herself brought out information about both the techniques and the person. Questions about the ethnographer proved to be more potent than direct questions about "being observed."

The interviewers utilized a set of questions which would provide individuals an opportunity to report in a very open fashion, yet focus them in such a way that their views on ethnography and the ethnographer were obtained. Probing questions often followed the more general open questions. Because this was a focused rather than a structured interview, additional questions were frequently

used to follow respondents in the directions they chose. The questions are presented in Figure 1.

The professional staff[3] who conducted these interviews with the subjects of the ethnographic study were chosen with great care. It was necessary that they be accepted as worthy of trust. The subjects were promised that the data would be confidential so that candid and straight-forward responses might be obtained. In addition, they were assured that the information which they were willing to share would be utilized as a contribution to ethnographic research methodology. Arrangements for the interviews were made with utmost consideration of those to be interviewed. The subjects' willingness to participate was secured and they were told in advance the intent of the interview. The interviewers traveled to the field site where a number of interviews were tape-recorded. Those individuals who were recorded had given their permission and seemed completely comfortable with the procedure.

A typescript of each person's responses was produced. Each response was identified with a unique code assigned for each person. Responses then were synthesized as they provided data on the same topic or question. Responses were further grouped according to the person's role as described above, as classroom teacher, facilitator or administrator. An analysis of these data resulted in findings which are reported by group when there were apparent differences or similarities of the three groups. When this was not the case, other logical variables inferred from responses were utilized to group data.

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[3]Special acknowledgement must be given to PAEI/CBAM colleagues Bill Rutherford and especially Beulah Newlove who aided in the data collection.

Figure 1

Focused Interview Questions

What is your personal reaction to the ethnographer? What were your initial or first reactions? Did they change? What made them change?

How do you view the ethnographer, her function, her role? What is the ethnographer doing? What were the first things you remember the ethnographer doing in the setting or in your school?

How visible is the ethnographer in the school or in your system?

How is the ethnographer accepted? How was trust built?

Do you feel any uneasiness? Are there any stresses due to the ethnographer's presence? Do you see anyone else being the slightest bit uncomfortable as the ethnographer tries to keep up with what is going on?

Do you feel any differently about the ethnographer this year compared to last year? Have your reactions or perceptions changed over time?

Are there events or kinds of meetings where you would prefer not to have the ethnographer present?

Have you ever talked to the ethnographer about her method?

Do you have any questions or concerns about the confidentiality of the data?

Synthesis of Interview Responses

Responses to the questions and the reactions of the participants revolved around several broad themes. The first four groupings reflect responses to direct questions. The remaining three groups categorize comments volunteered by participants at the close of the interview. These themes are:

1. Personal reactions to the ethnographer and having her at the site. Evidence of stress or uneasiness, perceived initially or over time, as the research progressed.

2. Insights into the function, role or purpose of the ethnographer, how visible she appeared to the study participants and how they described what she was doing.

3. Acceptance of ethnography by participants. How they felt about the confidentiality of the data being gathered, and whether there were events or circumstances in which they would have preferred not to have an ethnographer present. This section includes comments about trust and how it is established.

4. Participants' concerns about the methodology, the accuracy, and the processing and use of the data collected.

5. Desire for feedback to teachers, facilitators and administrators.

6. Ethnographers' impact or influence on the people and processes under study. Effects of interactions and interventions are commented on.

7. Characteristics of ethnographers and role requirements.

Brief tables of responses are included, as a preface to the discussion in which each of the themes will be reported in some detail. It should be noted that not all subjects responded to every question; therefore, data is not available for each person for each item.

Reactions and Stress

Reactions and Stress

	Number Responding	Number Stress	Uncom-fortable	Saw Stress in Others
Facilitators	7	4	3	1
Administrators	6	4	0	2
Teachers	19	14	4	3

Change in Feelings

	Number Responding	No Difference	Some Change
Facilitators	5		5
Administrators	4	1	3
Teachers	7	3	4

Twenty-two participants reported that they were not personally concerned, nor were they initially uncomfortable about having an ethnographer in their setting. They indicated that they felt little stress; they felt at ease with her and didn't pay too much attention to her. They reported comfort in knowing why she was there; they commented about how nice and pleasant the ethnographer was and how nice she was to talk to. Six persons stated they saw stress in others (one participant suggested that it was easier to observe stress in others than in oneself). They indicated that they saw some wariness in others who would ask, "Who is that, what is she doing, why does she always ask questions?"

Only seven of the 39 individuals interviewed suggested that they themselves felt uncomfortable with the ethnographer. These were teachers and facilitators--none were administrators.

Teaching or training context. Though there was generally a very low level of concern or stress (from only seven persons) with having an ethnographer at a study site, the most concerned remarks came from those persons who were observed

in interaction with others in a teaching or training context. These people suggested that they had less-than-comfortable feelings. For instance, one teacher remarked, "They have been very pleasant people. I won't say they have been irritating whatsoever, but it is kind of nerve wracking when you have someone sitting and writing 'no telling what'. This has bothered some of the other teachers and especially when the [ethnographers] are here all day. They don't like it all day. I hope I don't have one all day. And yet, when I go by my observer and lean down and make some comment about, 'Wow, I can't get it out of them today,' she would smile and make some sort of response."

Another teacher in this situation remarked, "I guess I am not used to anybody being in the room with me on that first day, my first time with the kids. I don't know them and they don't know me. It is alright. I don't mind it, but at the beginning of the school year it is very hard." In the same vein, another teacher remarked, "I don't think anybody is going to feel comfortable about having somebody else in their room, particularly the first couple of days of school and obviously that is why nothing like this has ever been done before."

The first days of school are a stressful time for teachers, and to have an outside observer in their room is of concern to them. Other teachers remarked that they were quite comfortable with observers in their room, but one commented that sometimes when the children misbehave, "I feel just like a mother who has gone to the grocery store and her child is screaming. I feel embarrassed. And yet, I think I know what I am doing and so I am not usually very threatened by anybody that is coming in to visit because I feel like I am doing it right."

A facilitator had a very clear description of the times when she was feeling uncomfortable. "When you are unsure of yourself it is difficult knowing that there is someone going to be there watching all your goofs. The only time I really recognize it is when I am really bombing badly and I look up and happen

to see her and it dawns on me that... I have bombed badly. [E]verything that I know I have done wrong, every defensive mechanism I have pulled out of the woodwork and I tried to hide, she is there recording." Interestingly, there was real disappointment when something had gone very well and the ethnographer was not there to record it. Participants were accustomed to her being there and noticed occasions when she might have missed something.

It appears that there are three reasons why persons in educational settings, particularly those who are involved in interactions with learners, feel some stress when an ethnographer is with them. The first of these is that particular sensitivity in the very early days of school or any training or interaction within a teacher- or trainer-learner context. A second reason is embarrassment when children misbehave or when learners do not come up to the performance expectations of the teacher. Thirdly is frustration when the teacher or trainer realizes that he or she is not coming off well and doesn't know whether the ethnographer is going to understand why that is happening.

Yet, most people in educational settings seem to be accustomed to having a great many people around. There are many visitors from the community and consultants in schools. Most people do not seem to be too concerned by having yet another person there. One teacher summed it up by saying, "It makes absolutely no difference to me at all. When I am able to service a research project, it is rewarding to me because I am in the profession and I want to do everything I can, personally, to help in the research and in the improvement of that profession."

Change over time. The sixteen participants who responded to these questions indicated varied reactions or feelings toward the ethnographer as the research progressed. Some felt increasingly positive about this person and became quite accustomed to having her there. In fact, one facilitator said, "I get embarrassed now because I forget to introduce her at meetings,...she has become so much a

'part of the woodwork.'" Another facilitator suggested that at first he and others felt uneasy, but as time went on they accepted the ethnographer and did not feel threatened any longer. An administrator commented, "I have developed trust and self-confidence in what is going on. Everyone is comfortable and I see positive acceptance of the project and the ethnography [sic] role." It appears that at first there is some curiosity about who this person is and what she is going to be doing. Then participants realize what her functions are and that she is performing them. When this happens, they develop a positive attitude about her and her role.

Participants indicated that their acceptance of the ethnographer was aided by getting to know her better. They said that having a personal conversation with the ethnographer, sitting down and talking about the ethnographer's role or other unrelated matters encouraged acceptance and more positive feelings about the ethnographer. After such a conversation, a facilitator stated that, "I feel the same about her, but I think now I can see her caring more about what goes on with the project."

Comments about how the ethnographer changed in how she related to persons and the projects over time came from two administrators. One suggested that the ethnographer had become more aloof and more involved with data collecting, while in the previous year she was more involved with people. In a different setting, an administrator remarked that as the work progressed there were more focused questions, which seemed curious. "I had never had anybody pay that much attention before to what I did. There is more probing, almost investigative. There seems to be more ethnography in my head the last several months than there was earlier. Maybe, that is must my awareness of it or it is a combination of both."

Role and Visibility

Role and Function

	Number Responding	Didn't know role or purpose	Described ethnographer as an observer/questioner with a variety of purposes
Facilitators	9		9
Administrators	8		8
Teachers	18	11	7

Visibility

	Number Responding	Unobtrusive, not noticed	Noted where they saw her
Facilitators	6	4	2
Administrators	6	5	1
Teachers	12	10	2

Simplistic views. For some, perceptions of the role were overly simplistic. In response to questions about the ethnographer's role or function, one facilitator's response was "getting writer's cramp!" In like vein another facilitator stated that he "had never seen a lady take so many notes in [his] entire life." While twenty-four persons cutting across all three role groups of teachers, facilitators, and administrators described an ethnographer as an observer, there were eleven persons, all in the teachers' group, who did not seem to know what the role or purpose of the ethnographer was, or if they knew, the were not able to describe it very well.

Uncertain views. For many, there was uncertainty and confusion about the ethnographer. There were a variety of comments from the eleven teachers who did not know what the role was or were uncertain about it. For instance, one

teacher said, "They told me, but then I have learned not to believe anything." Another doubting response came from a teacher who could not see how information concerning human beings could be jotted down, put into a computer and produce anything concrete. Another teacher and her class apparently spent some time discussing the role of the ethnographer. The children in this classroom were interested in what was going on and finally, after a couple of weeks, asked if the gentleman in the room were a reporter. The teacher said that the children were getting used to it, that it did not bother them very much, but they were curious about his job.

Two individuals in this teacher group thought that possibly the ethnographer's role had probably been defined for them at some time, but they could not say specifically. Some said that they were unsure for a long time and finally decided, after having talked with the ethnographer several times, that she was just an outside person looking in, trying to form opinions on what was going on and how people felt about what was going on. Similarly, another person in this teacher group said that, "I am sure the ethnographer was probably introduced to the faculty as a whole and told what she is doing, but I probably didn't pay attention. I am the type of person that if I am not interested at the moment, I don't pay any attention [sic]. Later, after we had been in meetings together and she listened to what was going on, she would come around and we would discuss it. What I was really doing was filling her in on the way I felt. It was for her information, I guess."

Concise views. Administrators were able to give the most concise role definitions, such as, "She is taking down an accurate, on-the-spot description of what is occurring. She is giving a disinterested, third-party point of view." Another responded that "the documentation is being done systematically by a sensible, sensitive person who will check to make sure she is clear about

what is occurring. This will provide a central repository for information."

Extending what was noted earlier, personal interaction with the ethnographer increases understanding of what the whole role is about. For instance, one administrator commented that, "I know her a little bit better now and also have more appreciation for her talents after having interacted with her personally. Also, I saw her perform in a professional way outside of her role as ethnographer and it gave me an appreciation for the fact that she is a professionally capable person...I can assume that her role as ethnographer is being done in a very professional and capable way." A classroom teacher described how she came to understand the ethnographer's role. At first it was not clear what she was to do. Then she came around and talked to each teacher about what they thought about some meetings and what they thought had been accomplished. That was when there was understanding about what she was doing.

Visibility. Participants across all three groups and in all three studies indicated that all ethnographers fit right in and were a part of the setting. They were not noticed. Of course, in small meetings they were obviously more noticed than they were in larger meetings, but in no case did anyone make any comments which would indicate that they drew any more attention than anybody else in a meeting. One facilitator indicated that most people would not know if the ethnographer were writing notes or sending letters. An administrator offered the opinion that "absolutely neutral vibes" were picked up, there were no pros or cons, the ethnographer acted just as one of the group and became an expected part. Another administrator very colorfully analyzed how adept the ethnographer was at getting the information, saying, "She was the type of person who, when sitting down and talking with you, you never realize you were being interviewed. It might seem just like having a friendly chat with a visitor in the school and you never realized that your bones had been picked clean!"

The ethnographers were unobtrusive and moved freely through the setting without drawing an undue amount of attention to themselves. Being unduly visible in the research setting was not a problem. Participants did not seem to view the ethnographers as strangers in their setting. They stated that the ethnographers seemed to be familiar with schooling and fit in, in a very comfortable kind of way.

Acceptance of Ethnography

	Confidentiality			Presence at Meetings, etc.		
	Number Responding	No Concern	Some Concern	Number Responding	No Concern	Concerned
Facilitators	5	5		5	3	2
Administrators	6	4	2	5	4	1
Teachers	8	7	1	8	6	2

Trust and Acceptance

	Number Responding	Trusted ethnography	Did not accept her
Facilitators	6	6	
Administrators	6	6	
Teachers	10	10	

Confidentiality of data. The majority of interviewees responded similarly to the matter of confidentiality. One teacher wondered if possibly the ethnographer would pass on things which she had heard. Two teachers mentioned that they would not share anything with an ethnographer that they would not share with other people. But all other comments from five facilitators, six administrators and eight teachers indicated that they believed strongly that ethnographers would keep information confidential, and that it never occurred to them to feel that it

would be otherwise. They felt that ethnographers were professionals, that they were persons who would treat data in a confidential way. They expressed a very trusting attitude toward them in this respect.

There was a single incident in which notes being transcribed in a typewriter were accidentally exposed to one participant who read comments about herself and others. This distressed her extremely, causing some "heart failure," as she put it. The fact that this happened and the consequences that it could have had were shocking to all concerned. Participants involved were henceforth more guarded and somewhat anxious about sharing information. This occurrence was regarded as carlessness in processing data, not a breakdown of the ethnographer's guarantee of confidentiality. Participants' extreme caution was shortlived. The breach of security was forgiven and never recurred.

That ethnographers attempted to avoid exposing their notes in meetings had caught some participants' attention. On one hand, they questioned the ethnographers' "furtively bending over the notes," yet they strongly agreed that notes should be concealed.

Desire for privacy. Few participants commented that there were times when they wished to exclude the ethnographer from some event. One teacher stated that there was one time when he was embarrassed that the ethnographer had been observing. It had been a hard day and everybody at a certain meeting was frustrated and having difficulty controlling their feelings and holding their tempers. The ethnographer was new at this time, so it was somewhat embarrassing to have her in on that meeting. The teacher concluded that later on he felt o.k. that she had been there. Another teacher said that during parent conferences, if it was felt that having another person there would distress parents, they did not ask the ethnographer to leave, but simply moved the location of their meetings. A facilitator stated that it was inappropriate for an observer to attend certain

meetings he had with teachers. He did not expound on this topic.

A teacher stated, "There was never a time when you felt she shouldn't be there, she was one of us and never interfered with what was going on, she didn't bother anyone. A less biased opinion can be obtained from an outsider like her, who is looking in, than someone involved in what is going on." Most persons said that there was never a time when they had wished she was not there and that there were no situations they could imagine from which she should be excluded. They said that the ethnographer never hindered them and that they were happy to have her in any meetings.

A facilitator and an administrator both commented on the climate and dynamics of meetings, especially in small meetings when the ethnographer was present. Without indicating preference for including or excluding her, they expressed curiosity about the dynamics of meetings when an ethnographer is there or not. In a related comment, a facilitator cautioned that climate or rapport is a very fragile thing when developed. It is entirely possible that, when another person is introduced into the mix, such as an ethnographer, the climate or the dynamics of the situation could very easily be changed.

In summary, however, there was nearly total accord (among the 18 respondents who replied to this question, in the three groups) that the ethnographer was perfectly welcome at most meetings and most events and was not seen as an outsider. These views were supported by their comments about having trust in the ethnographer.

Trust. One might wonder how an ethnographer becomes accepted and trusted. Twenty-two of the participants discussed trust in response to a question about it. They stated that they had been very open and had never held back nor failed to say anything because an ethnographer was present. How people come to feel this comfortable and trusting of someone who is observing and recording their actions is a very curious thing. This is especially true when one considers the contradiction

of participants' extreme openness and their simultaneous comments like "my life is dead," or "this could be our death," when considering the ramificaitons of certain data being released to the wrong persons.

Use of a broker. One way in which confidence and trust is bestowed on an ethnographer is through the use of a broker, a person who introduces the ethnographer into the system. Because that person is trusted, the ethnographer hopes to become trusted. Obviously, once brokered, the ethnographer bears the burden of establishing trust. For instance, a facilitator vouched for an ethnographer to her teacher friends. She helped bridge the gap so that they now have an accepting and trusting relationship with the ethnographer. In another case an administrator brokered an ethnographer to a group of administrators. One of the administrators recalled, "I knew he (the broker) was a task master and a sensitive task master, so I knew the ethnographer would be competent. He did influence my opinion that I could trust the ethnographer with sensitive information." Likewise, another administrator in this group reflected that, "What I trusted to be done, and what I certainly hope is being done, is to collect quite detailed notes and to be very frank in those notes, but at the time of publication to use good common sense in what is said and what is not said and to protect us. That is the assumption that I have been going on." This person was willing to go on that assumption because of confidence in the broker who had introduced the ethnographer into the system.

Early role definition. Another suggestion for how the ethnographer can be accepted more easily into the system is to define the role early in the project. Defining the ethnographer's role early may set the stage for her acceptance and trust. Continual and consistent definition of the role underlies that trust and clarifies her function in the research activity.

Protecting confidences. Facilitators and administrators suggested the early role definition and use of a broker for introducing the ethnographer into the

system. These persons also commented that there were no violations of confidences. One way to find out if the ethnographer is trustworthy, it was stated, is to check her out and find out if she keeps information confidential. A facilitator reported that she had carefully told the ethnographer some things, and when words did not come back she felt like everything would be just fine. There were comments from other facilitators and administrators indicating that the ethnographer did not share confidences, that there had been no violations. A facilitator stated that he wanted some information from the ethnographer but that she would not give it to him because it would betray a confidence. At this point he knew that he could "trust the ethnographer implicitly."

Although one teacher suggested that, "If she didn't talk to me about others, she would..'t talk about me either," the majority of teachers did not address the matter of confidentiality.

Involvement in the site. What most teachers did mention, along with two facilitators and one administrator, was that the ethnographer had become involved and had gotten to know people. At one site there had been some social interaction when the ethnographer had, for instance, brought a salad to a pot luck supper and had shared the recipe. There were frequent, quick, off-task, personal interactions with people, sharing information not related to confidential matters. The ethnographer had expressed interest in the members of the institution, in the institution itself, and in the innovation which was being implemented. At the site, a facilitator said, "She demonstrated that she understands us and our situation and that she had genuine concern for the project going on in the school." One teacher commented that the ethnographer tried to get to know each person by talking about something other than school, by trying to find out their interests and background. Another teacher stated, "Part of the trust and acceptance of her was that she got right in with us. She learned names, she learned the names of

teams and she had a very outgoing personality."

This whole matter of personality was repeated time and time again. The ethnographers were described as polite, nice, warm, cordial, "a real person," efficient, personable, smiling, happy, patient, honest, open, responsible perceptive, discreet. Ethnographers were also described as busy and friendly people, constantly on-task, with knowledge of the institution and the on-going project.

Professionalism. There were many comments about the professional attitude and professional competence of the ethnographers. One administrator remarked on the level of professionalism, the direct and open approach to getting what was needed to discharge the obligations of the role. He suggested that warm, open, business-like and above-board behavior builds trust. Another administrator recalled having developed insights into the professional competence of the ethnographer during a workshop when the ethnographer pitched in and helped out. "That is primarily where I got to know her and became aware of some of her skills. I think that she is a very highly skilled person and there was no opportunity to observe that in her role as ethnographer. She stepped out of that to help us with that workshop."

A teacher indicated that the ethnographer did not infringe on his time. She made appointments, always checked to see if he was free and if meeting was convenient, and thus made sure that she was welcome. This seemed a very positive note.

Trust and acceptance tend to grow unless some act disrupts them. Trust spreads and is reinforced as people talk amongst themselves. Distrust may be reinforced in similar fashion. A facilitator analyzed the situation in a very perceptive manner. When asked how the ethnographer interacted with people and established trust, she responded that as the ethnographer talks with others they

check perceptions. They almost demand that their perceptions or feelings be reinforced or negated.

Ethnographic Methods and Data

Methodology

	Number Responding	Asked About it	Never inquired
Facilitators	4	2	2
Administrators	4	2	2
Teachers	6	0	6

Accuracy

	Number Responding	Volunteered Positive Comment	Volunteered Concern
Facilitators			
Administrators	5	1	4
Teachers			

Processing/Use of Data

	Number Responding	Expressed No Concern	Concern/ Curiosity Expressed
Facilitators	1		1
Administrators	2		2
Teachers	3	2	1

Ethnography as Research

	Number Responding	Positive in attitude	Doubtful in attitude
Facilitators	7	7	
Administrators	5	4	1
Teachers	4	4	

Two facilitators mentioned that they had sat and talked with the ethnographer about what she was doing and that she had explained on several occasions when she came in to chat what she was doing and why she was doing it. However, most participants said that they had never questioned the methodology and could not remember if it had been explained to them. Teachers were completely unconcerned and exhibited no interest. When questioned, there were four persons, two facilitators and two administrators, who did wonder what the ethnographer's personal method was although they were not overly worried about it. An administrator wondered what she was really collecting and if it was important for people to "really open up to her or is it basically to give impressions about how things are going or to provide minutes of meetings and things like that? It is kind of a mysterious process," she concluded. A faciliator wondered what an ethnographer excludes when writing or transferring material to some other form. She asked, "As the ethnographer, how do you decide what is left out? If getting everything is important, is everything sent?" There seemed to be few questions about the ethnographer's methodology.

Accuracy. Though a question was not directly framed to gain participants' attitudes about the accuracy of the information that was being collected, several administrators, but no teachers or facilitators, expressed their concern about accuracy, during their interviews. One administrator commented that although she had not seen any of the reports, she was concerned about whether they were

"value free." If they were value free, she asked, of what use would they be?

There were administrators concerned to know if reports were going in accurately and in such a manner that one person does not come out "looking better than the other," especially in a project where there may be some antagonism among participants and, perhaps, disagreements about how things should go. Another administrator, in a different project, commented on the same issue. If an ethnographer "sides" too much with some element, he cautioned, then perhaps the ethnographer presents material in such a way that only one side is communicated. This was not an opinion about a specific ethnographer, but just an observation about the process. Another person's comment was that any special liaison with one person in a project might result in the ethnographer seeing things more through that person's eyes or seeing more of that persons's "side." Apparently, if an ethnographer remains aloof from any special liaisons with people involved in the project, she is viewed as being less likely to slant the reporting in one direction or another.

Two other administrators observed that there is always a chance that the ethnographer is building up a whole store of misinformation, but that by asking for information, the ethnographer validates what she views and her accuracy can be trusted more. Ethnographers who ask for information for the purpose of confirming their notes are viewed as being more accurate in their reporting.

Processing data. Participants seem to have a high degree of trust about the processing and use of the data being collected. They did not seem to wonder too much about what was going to happen to the information. Of three teachers who offered comments, one expressed satisfaction with the explanation that the information was being gathered for research. Another thought the ethnographer was collecting data to compile with the rest of the ongoing research although hers was different from the other data collection going on. Another teacher

indicated some concern, but figured that the ethnographer was there to evaluate how money was being spent and whether it was doing any good or not. The one facilitator who commented seemed a little more curious. He asked, "Who is going to see this stuff, what are they going to do with it? When we finally read all about it, we are going to start seeing ourselves and we are going to wonder why we were so open." This person was positive that this would happen. "It always does," he continued, "you never see yourself as a researcher is going to see you. There is no way, because you can make all those excuses that researchers don't make for you."

One administrator was curious about the processing and use of the data since ethnography is a new technique. "The concept seems fairly simple. Yet, the more I thought about it and the more I watched that data become more massive, the more I became curious about how the thing could work. It is a from of data collecting that I am not familiar with. To continue to collect this data in sort of what I call 'messing around format' is kind of strange to me. I am curious about the whole thing. What will happen with it is something I think I became very interested in, partly academic interest just for my own enlightenment, and partly [because] someday, years from now, I'd like to walk into the archives and ask for the volumes of information so I could relive a very important part of my life." Another administrator thought that the task is, first, unusual, and second, seems to be almost impossible.

It is difficult for people to really know what ethnography is about and how it is going to be used. It is such a different kind of research that is is difficult for people to see the use in it; that is, what type of information is being really looked for and what value it is. It might be very helpful, it was suggested, to allow the ethnographer to pick a neutral topic, but one which is real to the site, such as a typical meeting, and show how it would be reported on. The written report or notes could be shown to the people concerned as an

example of what ethnography is about. One person stated, "I think that this could do a lot to establish the credibility of that person, if people could just have an idea about what kind of stuff is being written down and...how it makes it into the hopper at the end." Such comments came from few of the participants across the study sites. Apparently it is an issue which has not aroused a great deal of curiosity in very many people.

Ethnographic research. Fifteen of the 16 persons who responded to a question about how they felt about ethnography as research, were very positive. An administrator offered the opinion that ethnography is a powerful tool for extracting principles or guidelines. From another administrator came the idea that ethnography can gain more insight into what is actually going on than other forms of data collection, such as questionnaires and paper/pencil instruments. The ethnographer could also validate data obtained through other research processes. She would be a double check on the paper/pencil data that is being gathered. A facilitator stated that this kind of research effort should be applied with programs in developmental stages. "It would be helpful to get this kind of data gathered to see the dynamics of change, to see really what happens and what are the negative and positive influences."

It was suggested that ethnographic data collection could get those things which other kinds of data collection and instrumentation could not. Two teachers suggested that the ethnographer could pick up on the climate and the tone of situations and what people were doing all the time. They could, perhaps, pick up on how individuals changed and how the climate of meetings might have changed from one point in the year to another. They would also be able to see more of the total picture and how individuals fit together in that picture to make things work. Another teacher expressed satisfaction that there was somebody who would be objective, a person who was not a part of the program or involved in it who

could observe and then ask pointed questions stemming from those observations.

The one administrator who expressed some reservation about this methodology focused on the problem of explaining what the ethnographer really is doing.

Feedback

Feedback

	Number Responding	Hoped to get feedback
Facilitators	4	4
Administrators	2	2
Teachers	1	1

Several respondents had hoped to get some form of feedback or had hoped that the data gathered would be used in the project. For instance, one teacher wished that feedback had been given to the administration, thinking that it would have been helpful if the ethnographer had related the kinds of feelings there were. Four facilitators who value feedback stated that it might have been employed as a "pay-off" for participants' cooperation. They were disappointed that the data had not been used in this way. One administrator felt that if he personally were to put any significant energy into the ethnographic process, then he would be looking for feedback as a kind of pay-off.

Understandably, facilitators and administrators had more wish for feedback than teachers did because they saw it as a very powerful tool which could help them move their projects along. A facilitator and an administrator indicated that they had asked the ethnographer for feedback and the ethnographer had said, regretfully, "I will not be able to do that. That would destroy my role here." The administrator recalled, "I thought we would get a chance to see how the ethnographer perceived what was going on and a chance to debrief it. It probably never was in the cards, as I look back on it now."

Ethnographers' Impact

Impact/Influence/Intervention

	Number Responding	Saw no intervention	Saw influence because of interactive questioning	Saw impact because of alignment
Facilitators	6	1	4	1
Administrators	4		1	3
Teachers	1		1	

Eleven persons (six facilitators, four administrators, one teacher) addressed the matter of the impact or influence of the ethnographer on the system under observation. One faciliatator said, "Clearly, she did not try to move us; she did not intervene." Another facilitator said that the ethnographer had provided input. He gave as a specific example a debriefing session where the group was evaluating a meeting and the ethnographer asked focusing questions followed by suggestions of options which the group might have. She concluded by asking, "What are we going to do?" This facilitator thought that the ethnographer had become frustrated by "watching us go in circles" and was in a helping mode.

Persons from all three groups commented on the interactive styles of the ethnographers. These interactions provided opportunities for participants to react to questions. The teacher sensed that in asking the questions, ethnographers guided them without their (the participants) knowing it. A facilitator suggested that the ethnographer had planted ideas by posing questions such as, "Have you ever thought of..." or "Are you considering...". He reported that several teachers had perceived this and shared it with him.

Another facilitator stated that any time you think about what you are doing, you evaluate what you are doing. This person did not think it was the ethnographer's role or intention to do so, but thought that her questioning activities did

comprise an intervention and might have caused people to change somewhat. Another facilitator noted that the opportunity to rebound some thoughts off the ethnographer made it possible for him to reflect on his own actions. He said, "We fought some wars together--she fought in her own way." The same facilitator believed that the ethnographer had had some impact or influence on the situation by questioning the participants and sharing information about what was going on in similar projects in other locations.

One of the administrators suggested that the presence of the ethnographer and her interactions caused people to think about the events they were involved in. Reporting to her, giving her developmental, step-by-step accounts of what had happened since she was last there was also a contributing factor. The administrator said that he and others viewed this positively. In other words, the process made individuals reflect and think systematically about their actions and the innovation implementation process.

This notion of influencing by interacting in a questioning style was discussed by another administrator who did not suggest whether or not the ethnographer had intervened but who stated that an ethnographer who just observes and documents a situation can present a totally low profile. She explained, to the extent that an ethnographer interacts with people and questions and raises their level of awareness, she has the power to focus them on issues which may not have seemed very important to them, but which can grow in stature. This administrator thought that it must be a very difficult task not to intervene if you are an interviewing ethnographer. She suggested that when there is minimal interaction with persons in the study, then there is little opportunity for the ethnographer to intervene or influence. This dimension marks the difference between the ethnographer who interacts and one who simply observes. We have a variety of opinions about how the ethnographer can, in a subtle manner, or

perhaps in a not so subtle manner, ask questions which may cause people to focus on problems and then make some efforts to address them. In this matter, the ethnographer can have an influence on participants which is indirect yet real.

"Overalignment" with a small group or clique or with one particular person in the system was identified as a significant way in which ethnographers intervene or have impact on the system. Facilitators and administrators, but no teachers, noted five ways in which such alignment may have effect. The first of these was bias. They thought that an ethnographer's reports might be influenced by over-identification with a few persons or by abundant interaction with them. A second concern was for maintenance of credibility. Participants noted that "out-group" members would wonder what the ethnographer and her confidant(s) talked about when together socially. They questioned, "Is what I have been saying to her being spread to these other persons who seem to be her confidants?"

A third concern expressed was that these relationships might hinder the ongoing implementation process. If some participant in the system interacts more often or too often with the ethnographer, it was thought, then perhaps the participant does not interact with others in the system. For participants who become identified as close firends of the ethnographer, less active personal and professional relationships with other persons in the system may result.

Respondents stated, fourth, that since the ethnographic role includes listening, it is not possible to react pro or con without destroying the listening role. An undue amount of listening may be taken as acquiescence or agreement and very easily construed to reinforce behavior, either positive or negative, in the person who is sharing. In other words, if someone talks to you and you listen and you nod, the talker might infer that you are in agreement, condoning what is being shared.

A fifth concern about the close relationship of the ethnographer with some

special person or small group of persons in the system was the fear that it could prevent people from expressing thoughts that should be brought out into the open. For instance, if a person has a real need to confront someone else about a problem but, instead, complains to the ethnographer with whom he or she is close, the difficulty with the other person is not resolved through interaction with the appropriate person. The problem has been laid out in the open, but the ethnographer is bound by her role not to repeat what she has heard, not even to the third party to such an interchange.

Characteristics of Ethnographers

Required Characteristics

Personal

	Number Responding	Need "positive" personality traits	Similar to persons in the setting
Facilitators	3	3	
Administrators	3	3	1
Teachers	1	1	

Professional

	Number Responding	Data Collector	Competent & Flexible	Perceived Neutrality	No Debriefing
Facilitators	2			2	1
Administrators	4	1	1	2	2
Teachers	2		1	1	

Personal. When respondents were given an opportunity at the end of the interview to say anything further that they wished to, there were suggestions from a number of persons about characteristics or requirements that they perceived to be necessary for a successfully functioning ethnographer. One facilitator suggested that only a very special kind of person can step into

the role of ethnographer. It was seen as a tighter role than most other professional roles because "you are walking a different kind of rope."

One teacher, three facilitators and three administrators volunteered comments about personal characteristics which should be required of ethnographers. They should be bright, perceptive, warm and open. One administrator suggested that the ethnographer must be a person who can build trust, who can get along with people and who can relate to them and make them feel comfortable. He noted that not just anyone could do that. It was suggested by another administrator that this person should be similar to the people in the system with whom they are going to be working.

Professional. One administrator stated that ethnographers must obviously be good data collectors, for they must be thorough and able to pick up on significant information in interviews. Another administrator similarly suggested that the person must be competent and have the ability to ask questions that will elicit the information they need. A teacher commented that ethnographers should be flexible and able to fit their own schedules into the system in which they are working.

Again, study participants see two types of ethnographers--those who observe and record and those who observe-record and then follow-up with interviews. One of the administrators had knowledge or understanding of the ethnographic process in advance. He was familiar with being interviewed and debriefed about observation sessions. This person wanted, as a ground rule, that he not be expected or required to explain his actions after the observation session. "I had no objections to her being an observer and a listener and making notes of things that happened or transpired, but on the other hand I did not want to be critiqued. I didn't want such things as 'why did you say that?' So there was a mutual understanding that we had when we went in and I had no objections to being

observed. In fact, I perform better in front of an audience, but I felt that I had enough to worry about with my duties and I didn't want another person in my hair to have to worry about."

Another administrator and a facilitator commented that the ethnographer had not spelled out in advance the need for interviews after observations. They suggested that some people became irritated with the questions, especially when they did not understand the point or the rationale of certain lines of questioning. It was suggested that if someone's response is going to be interpreted, they deserve to know why they are being asked the question. It appears that this was a minor concern, and was described as a conflict of needs. The ethnographer wants to talk to people and this is a hard thing to do in a very busy well-planned day. There are times when the ethnographer may seem to get in the way because any sort of one-to-one discussion is a disruption. Interestingly, some participants implicitly expected "no questions during meetings" but did expect a one-to-one "reaction session" afterwards. Frequently, individuals went voluntarily to the ethnographer's office to unload, share perceptions, or to "get on the record."

Another characteristic which several facilitators and administrators and one teacher noted as necessary was perceived neutrality. On the surface, they thought, the ethnographer should remain as neutral as possible. This they considered an unenviable position to be in. They suggested that ethnography must be an independent sort of thing and not impinge on the system. By this they meant being geographically independent and maintaining that distance. The ethnographer should come and go, staying away from any close association with persons in the system. All participants must perceive this neutrality. It was noted that this is not always required of other professionals who enter and leave the system, but they saw it as necessary for an ethnographer.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Following are brief conclusions suggested by these findings. Recommendations generated from the conclusions are addressed to ethnographers, although most certainly, research managers concerned with directing ethnographic research will be interested.

Personal reactions. Few people who were interviewed reported that they felt stress or discomfort about ethnographers. Those who did were in a teaching or training context with learners and were distressed when they were not performing successfully or when their learners were not performing in expected ways. It appears that as time passes and people interact with ethnographers, they become more comfortable with having them around.

For those few persons who indicate or demonstrate stress or discomfort with ethnography, a personal conversation or personal interaction helps. Knowing that it may take some time for everyone "to come around" to understanding and accepting the ethnographer and ethnographic purpose, patience and time may be productive investments.

Role and visibility. Teachers are less able to define the ethnographer's role than facilitators and administrators, although all three groups indicated that ethnographers fit into the setting and were little noticed.

When individuals get to know and understand the role, then the ethnographer is "in." The role should be explained ahead of time and persons reminded over and over why the ethnographer is there. Checking the perceptions of individuals is important so that misperceptions can be corrected. If the ethnographer can gain appreciation for being capable in a related role, then it appears that capability as an ethnographer will be assumed.

Acceptance and trust. The majority of persons responding believed the ethnographers would keep data confidential. Few were concerned about excluding

the ethnographer from meetings. They were trusting and open with ethnographers, yet they expressed in dramatic fashion the danger and risk they were taking in being so open.

To develop trust and acceptance a broker can be used to introduce the ethnographer to the system. The broker may also define the role, as understanding of the role by the study participants underlies trust. Quick off-task personal interactions contribute to acceptance and trust as does demonstrating professional businesslike behaviors which suggest competence. Asking in advance if it is okay to attend meetings and making advance appointments to chat with indiviudals probably helps to diffuse negativism and promotes accepted attendance for the ethnographers. Most critical--confidences should never be breached!

Ethnographic methods and data. Teachers had no interest in the ethnographer's methodology; the little concern about the method came from facilitators and administrators. Only administrators had concerns about the accuracy of reporting. There was curiosity in all three groups about the processing of the data, as well as positive comments about the value of ethnographic data collection. It is rather interesting that persons who report not knowing a great deal about the methodology, how ethnographers go about their work or how that work is processed, have no reservations about endorsing it as a legitimate data collecting procedure and a good way to get information that might not otherwise be collected.

Effort is required to make administrators feel comfortable with the accuracy of reports. Probing them to verify information seems to be a productive way to do this. Providing an example of what is being collected and how it is processed has been suggested as a way to help all study participants understand. From their perspective, this seems valid; for the researcher, how such an activity might influence the validity of data is an appropriate question.

Feedback. It is clear that for an ethnographer to get information s/he

must give something in return. One thing that there is a constant pressure or request for is feedback. Teachers, facilitators and administrators all hope that feedback from the ethnographer's data can be utilized to assist in their projects.

So that undue disappointment or negative reactions do not occur, it is essential to make clear at the outset of the ethnographic study what kinds of data will be fed back to whom and when.

Impact of ethnographers. Individuals appear to be sensitive to interview questioning and other ethnographer interactions with themselves and others. Teachers, facilitators and administrators all described a variety of ways in which the interactions of ethnographers with project participants can be influential. Facilitators and administrators identified several concerns about how "over-alignment" of the ethnographer with certain persons could have effects on the system.

It is important for ethnographers to be quite personable in order to gain acceptance, yet being too closely integrated with one or several persons in the system is viewed suspiciously. It is tough to be an observer and interviewer of what is happening and remain completely outside the situation. If the ethnographer is aloof, it will cost the project in the data that s/he gets, so there is loss on the one hand and gain on the other. Much easier to accomplish is interacting with a broad array of participants and avoiding an unbalanced amount of time with one or several specific persons.

Characteristics of ethnographers. Persons in all three groups volunteered their views of required personal characteristics for ethnographers, such as warmth and openness, being bright, perceptive, and personable. Administrators noted professional requirements, while administrators and facilitators alike made suggestions about how ethnographers might successfully handle ethnographer/participant interactions. Perceived neutrality of the ethnographer was addressed by all groups as a definite requirement.

It appears that ethnography demands special persons to fill the role: being personable enough to gain acceptance and confidence, yet not to the extent that individual personal relationships develop with particular people. Quite obviously the ethnographer must be capable in the skills of listening and reporting and perceptive in following up on significant items with effective questioning techniques.

As several persons volunteered during their interviews, ethnography is a tough job which no one really wants to have, and it takes a very special person to be able to do it.